



Family of Giving Gets Gift of Their Own

49th Public Affairs Detachment (Airborne)  

Story by Pfc. Victor Ayala

Date: 07.08.2009

Posted: 07.09.2009 03:25

FORT BRAGG, N.C. -- Most people know of the sacrifices of men and women in uniform. In time of war, the focus is most commonly on the warrior and his battles. The seldom mentioned battles are those fought by the husbands and wives who alone must keep a home and family strong while their spouse is away. In the early afternoon of July 8, the community of Fayetteville, N.C., showed its support to a very special military family whose struggles on the home front are far from ordinary.



Local contractors, Fayetteville City Council members and even Tony Chavonne, the mayor of Fayetteville, gathered together to present the Brewer family with their brand new house in Eastover, N.C. A ceremony and luncheon were held on the property to celebrate the Brewer family and their special story.

In 2008, Military Spouse Magazine introduced the world to Michelle "Chelle" Brewer, wife of 1st Lt. Steven Brewer, operations officer for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 188th Brigade Support Battalion, 18th Fires Brigade, when they named her 2008 Military Spouse of the Year. The magazine told the tale of a young wife with two children, Cavan, 7, and Lorelei, 4.

Lorelei was born with less than half of her heart, a condition which required open-heart surgery immediately after her birth in 2005. She pulled through the surgery but still requires large amounts of special equipment and special medical care to stay healthy. At four years old, Lorelei has surpassed all expectations set by doctors and continues to defy them as she continues with follow-on procedures.

"We were given a reminder right from the very start about how lucky we are to have her here," Chelle said. "She was born with a twin brother who didn't make it."

Chelle had to deal with many of these health issues alone as her husband was hospitalized far from home due to an accident at a training exercise around the time of Lorelei's birth. Chelle, Cavan and Lorelei never let the hard times beat them and have even used the bad to do some good.

Chelle and Lorelei now act as spokespersons for the American Heart Association, sharing their story with the world and promoting legislation to improve American health. The Brewer family also volunteers as the Ambassador Family for the March of Dimes WalkAmerica program, the American Red Cross and numerous other charitable organizations. In 2002, Chelle founded the Soldier's List organization which has sent nearly 40,000 care packages to deployed Soldiers since its inception.

In spite of all the help Chelle and the Brewer family gave to the military and global community, the Brewer's were in desperate need for help themselves. Lorelei's health called for unique additions to a home; additions neither the family nor the Army could provide.

"The Army worked very hard with us, trying to help us get what we needed," said Chelle. "But there just wasn't enough."

When Ralph Huff, owner of H & H Homes, heard the family's story from Military Spouse Magazine, he set to work on an 18-month endeavor that would pull together more than 20 local contractors and build the house the Brewer's would call home.

Huff donated a residential lot in Stone Creek at Eastover valued at \$41,000. Each of the contractors made their contributions for no charge, building the house piece by piece until the two-floor home was completed.

"We give all that we have to support our military because they give all they have to support us. The more you interact with these fine folks, the more you marvel at them," Huff said. "We can't give them enough."

The home was built with all of Lorelei's special needs in mind. Extra storage compartments and electrical outlets placed in the house were among the things required for Lorelei.

During the ceremony, Chelle thanked all those who contributed to the construction, many of whom she met for the first time that day.

"There was never any moment that I felt this was something you were doing for yourselves. You did it because you wanted to help someone in the community," she said.

"That's what I love. There's a feeling of community here. That's what I'm thankful for."

She also announced the house might soon be home to another child in need.

"I don't know if you realize it or not, but you're not just helping people here. You're also potentially helping a little child in China who we're going to adopt. He has severe scoliosis and a lung disorder that doctors won't even look at because he's considered an illegitimate child. You're giving us the ability to own a home to give this child a life," she said.

After the crowd left and things settled down, Chelle kissed her husband Steven goodbye as he went to work. Cavan and Lorelei played with old neighborhood friends who came to visit, laughing and running across the lawn. Already, the Brewer's seemed at home.

Associated Images

